

ECO CENTER FOR WOMEN

Legislative Report

July 2006 – June 2007

GENERAL

The ECO Center for Women opened in October 1987, to house 20 state female offenders who were eligible for work release. While the primary program is work release, residents (inmates) also participate in North Carolina Department of Correction programs for which they are eligible. These include family leave; community volunteer passes, and study release. Staff at the facility and in other parts of the ECO organization work with each resident to provide them with tools and experience that will assist them in their transition from prison to the community.

ECO's programs are based on two research studies that still hold true today, that show that employment and family support are key to reducing recidivism. The ECO Center for Women focuses on these two areas and provides opportunities that have also proven to reduce recidivism such as encouraging educational opportunities, creating a community support system and opportunities to grow spiritually.

DEMOGRAPHICS

During FY06-07, there were 27 residents ranging in age between 24 and 59 with the average age being 40. Of the 27 residents, 17 were Caucasian, 8 were African American and 2 were Hispanic. The 27 residents had a total of 60 children.

RESIDENT MOVEMENT

During the period of July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007, ECO Center for Women housed 27 women. With a maximum capacity of 20 residents, the Center experienced fluctuations in numbers for various reasons such as transfers, paroles, post release supervisions and releases based upon sentence completion. Five residents were released; one was under post release supervision. Two residents were transferred to a more secure facility due to disciplinary infractions (home leave violation, possession of a cell phone and unapproved method of transportation). At the end of the year there were twenty residents assigned to the ECO Center for Women.

Residents are held accountable for their location at all times away from the facility. Family Leave and Community Volunteer leave must have a staff approved itinerary with locations and times. In 2006-07 the ECO staff conducted 193 work release checks, 20 on site home leave checks, and 18 study release checks to ensure that residents were at their assigned location.

ECO conducts drug screens on residents on a regular basis. During the year 208 drug screens were conducted.

RESIDENTS' EMPLOYMENT

A main tenet held by ECO is that the residents gain employment under the Work Release Program, and establish a solid work history, which is vital to their success when they reenter society. Every work release employer is aware of the resident's current incarceration. Therefore, when an offer of employment is extended, the employer and the resident sign an agreement, which establishes ECO's commitment to the employer and the resident. All residents have a case manager who monitors their progress and success.

Another fundamental aspect of the work release program is that it enables residents to take on responsibilities in increments, which will allow them to become fully financially responsible upon release. All residents are required to pay a small portion of their incarceration expenses. North Carolina inmates are required to pay \$18.00 for every eight hours worked, not to exceed \$90.00 per week, which is a nominal portion of their total expenses. Residents are also responsible for paying for their personal expenses, taxes, fines, court ordered restitution and child support. Some of the residents take on the extra responsibility of paying voluntary child support.

In 2006-2007, the ECO residents earned a total of \$249,518.21. Out of these earnings, residents paid \$45,260.89 in restitution, \$10,976.04 in court ordered child support and \$10,377.85 in voluntary child support.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

EMPLOYERS

Fleet Trucking	Burger King	Chicken Coop
Courtside Café	Firehouse Subs	Fuel Pizza
Original Pancake House	Substation II	Subway
Talley's Green Grocer	Crowne Plaza	Goodwill Industries
My Brother's House	SocialServe.com	Paw's Inn
Value Village		

POSITIONS HELD IN EACH INDUSTRY

Clerical	Customer Service, Accounts Payable
Fast Food	Managers, Shift Leader, Cooks
Food Service	Manager, Shift Manager, Customer Service, Cashier, Cook, Food Prep
Hospitality	Housekeeping
Human Services	Director of Agency Outreach, Call Center Supervisor, Associate House Manager
Service Industry	Kennel Attendant, Grocery Stocker and Sales
Retail	Price merchandise, Floor Stocker, Cashier

OFFENDER INFORMATION

Of the 27 residents, twelve (12) had drug convictions, nine (9) had convictions for violent offenses and six (6) were convicted of property crimes. Three of the residents had also been convicted as habitual offenders.

PROGRAMS

FAMILY LEAVE AND SERVICES

The purpose of the family leave program is to prepare the residents for a successful reentry back into the community and their families. During their stay at ECO, residents are allowed to take supervised home leaves with their family members after staff conducts a thorough investigation into the home, community and the family, to ensure that it is beneficial to their transition.. Due to changes in the family leave policy, leaves are only allowed in the last twelve months of incarceration, twelve residents participated in home leave.

Residents at the facility have access to the Family Care Coordinator for the organization. She meets with residents before the initiation of home leave and after the first home leave has been taken. This helps residents prepare for what may happen during the home leave in regarding relationships with children and family, and provides a debriefing. She meets with residents upon their request and has assisted with residents attending school meetings regarding their children, and arranging counseling for the residents and child when needed. She also helps coordinate the Family Day event.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

The community volunteer program provides residents the opportunity to take supervised outings in the community with a private citizen. Community Volunteers are required to complete six hours of training and are allowed to take residents on planned outings. Activities include shopping, recreation, religious, substance abuse programs, counseling, and special events. This is a wonderful opportunity for the women to begin acclimating to the area and becoming integral members in the community. It is also a good way for residents to begin building a community support system to rely on once they are released. All of the residents participated in the Community Leave program during their assignment to ECO. The residents enjoyed a total of 196 passes, for about 1,100 community contact hours.

EDUCATION

Along with activities involving family and community, we encourage the residents to participate in furthering their education. The study release program allows the residents to participate in academic or vocational training. By furthering their education, every resident increases their chance of gaining better employment and expanding their scope of knowledge. Seven residents attended Central Piedmont Community College during this reporting period. Residents are studying medical transcription, business skills, computer skills and Basic Literacy Education (ABLE). One resident was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa and was listed on the President's list. Two residents attended a

“Get Motivated” daylong seminar with a staff member. One resident completed the six-week parenting program, *Becoming a Love and Logic Parent*.

EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

This year the YMCA ceased to provide free memberships for the residents. However, three residents agreed to sign up for the membership on their own and paid it out of their work release earnings.

COUNSELING AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Three residents continued counseling at the local mental health facility and one saw a private therapist. Residents pay for their own counseling while at ECO. During the year four residents regularly attended Narcotic Anonymous meetings.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Residents continue to provide Think Smart presentations in the community to group homes and school classes. Several residents volunteered at the local Crisis Assistance Ministry to help in their clothing ministry. With Love From Jesus is a local mission to help those in need. Residents helped distribute with special event distribution to families in need for the start of school, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Late in 2006-07, the ECO Board of Directors made a commitment to locate a new facility for the residents. The current facility has been used for 20 years and is worn out.

SPECIAL EVENTS

There are on going activities at the ECO Center for Women throughout the year. Many of the special events are in connection with local houses of faith and volunteer groups. Some of these include a monthly craft program, dinner brought in once per month, attending several church events such as plays and holiday musicals. However, there are a few to highlight:

- ❑ In June, all of the residents participated in a retreat at Fort Caswell. The entire event was paid for and arranged by Indian Trail Baptist Church.
- ❑ The Annual ECO Center for Women Family Day event was held at Freedom Park in September.
- ❑ Annual Volunteer Appreciation. This year we held an Afternoon Tea for the volunteers and had a small gift of appreciation for all they do for the residents.
- ❑ Residents attended a local showing of *A Perversion of Justice*, by local filmmaker, Melissa Mummert.

RECIDIVISM

Although the facility is small with only 20 beds and a statistical review would be invalid, a review of releases for 2004-2005 was conducted. Using the definition of recidivism as “no rearrest in 2

years,” ECO researched the NC Department of Correction and the Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office website for residents released during this period. For the residents outside of Mecklenburg County, a request was made for a statewide arrest record search through ASUS. This review of arrest for residents released from ECO during 2004-2005 revealed that of the eleven (11) released during this time period, there were two who were rearrested. One rearrest was for a misdemeanor bad check charge and the other was for felony drug charges.

STAFF TRAINING

During the year staff participated in the following training:

- ❑ Applied Control Theory, Level I and II
- ❑ Disciplinary Training provided by NC Department of Correction
- ❑ Ethics Training
- ❑ ACT Refresher Training
- ❑ Workplace Violence

COMMUNITY AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS and HOUSES OF FAITH

Charlotte Friends Meeting	Mecklenburg County Health Dept
CharlotteSaves	Mecklenburg County Area Mental Health
Community Health Services	Mecklenburg Parks & Recreation
Central Piedmont Community College	Narcotics Anonymous
Crisis Assistance Ministry	NCDMV
Duke Power Energy	Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Employment Security Commission	Second Harvest Food Bank
Indian Trail First Baptist Church	Social Security Administration
Idlewild Baptist Church	With Love from Jesus
IBM	United Way
Job Link	University Hills Baptist Church
	YMCA